

# Office of Human Resources

## Personnel Newsletter

December 2001

### The 2001 Review of the Aerospace Technology (AST) Classification Schematic

#### 1. What is the AST Classification System, or Schematic, and why was a review of it conducted?

##### What is the AST Schematic?

NASA has a unique job classification system, the NASA Supplemental Classification System (NSCS), which was developed to more precisely describe the type of work being done in this Agency—particularly aerospace work—than the rather broadly defined categories of work and occupations defined within the Federal position classification system. In this classification system there are 10 occupational groups—although only 7 of them are being used—based on the nature of the work being performed. These groups represent very broad categories of occupations; such as Technical Support Positions (300 Group), Clerical and Related Support Positions (500 Group), Administrative and Professional Positions (600 Group), etc.

The 700 Group covers professional engineering, scientific, or other technical positions engaged in professional research, development, operations, and related work pertaining to the basic NASA mission. This is often referred to as the AST (for “aerospace technology”) Group. The 700 Group has subgroups within it, and within each subgroup, there are specialties. These specialties have precise definitions describing the work and the knowledge needed to perform that work. This structure of AST subgroups and specialties is often referred to as the AST Schematic.

(Continued on page 2)

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 THE 2001 REVIEW OF THE AEROSPACE TECHNOLOGY (AST) CLASSIFICATION SCHEMATIC
- 1 SIMPLIFY YOUR HOLIDAYS!
- 3 ENGINEERING AND SCIENTIFIC TRAINING
- 4 FY01 EMPLOYEE RELATIONS ACTIVITY
- 5 NASA EXTERNAL AWARDS
- 6 2002 CALENDAR YEAR

### Simplify Your Holidays

A few brief ideas presented by the GRC Employee Assistance Program, Bldg. 15, Rm. 109, extension 3-2989

Remember what you once loved about the Holidays—then do it.

*Keep your emotional blinders on.  
Turn off Madison Avenue.  
Let family and friends know what you're doing.  
Don't let family and friends know what you're doing.  
Let go of what you think are other's expectations.  
Stop being a perfectionist.  
Rise above the guilt.  
Close the “family inn.”  
Explore other traditions.  
Have a holiday retreat.  
Choose to be alone.  
Return the Holidays to their humble beginnings.  
Rethink your holiday card list.  
Cut back on the number of gifts you buy.  
Talk to your kids about simplifying the Holidays.  
Give less, play more.  
Write a personal letter. Write a family letter.  
Maintain a 25-mile radius.  
Examine your motives for any behavior.  
Even though it's the Holidays, fruitcake still tastes bad.  
Forget the goods; give the services.  
Exchange your treasures.  
Give to someone who needs it.  
Boycott the Holiday Store.  
Plant a tree. Feed the birds. Select a symbol.  
Eliminate the turkey. Can the goose.  
Stop associating food, drink, with love.  
Turn off TV news for 1 week. Live the Holiday Spirit for 1 day.  
Figure how much you spend for the Holidays; cut that amount in half.  
Make a contribution to a charity of your choice.*

Further details of these ideas are contained in *Simplify Your Christmas: 10 Ways to Reduce the Stress and Recapture the Joy of the Holidays* by Elaine St. James, Andrews McMeel Publishing, Kansas City, 1998.

  
Seasons Greetings

## Why was the AST Schematic reviewed?

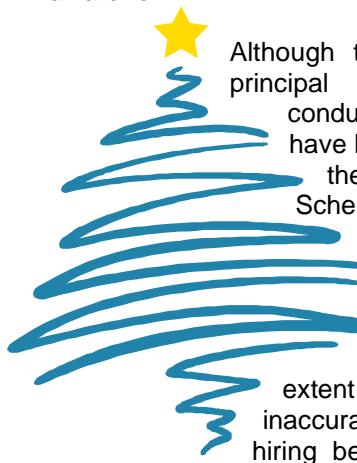
This review was actually part of the larger effort to review the entire NASA Supplemental Classification System to bring it up-to-date. That effort was undertaken in preparation for the acquisition of an automated classification system.

In order to provide NASA managers with more timely, consistent, and efficient classification support, thereby enabling them to fill positions more rapidly, a new position description management process and system is being implemented throughout NASA. This effort, known as the Position Description Management (PDM) Automation Project, is one of the initiatives under the Integrated Financial Management Program.

The PDM system will be the classification module, with software that automates the processes involved in creating classified positions and stores position descriptions electronically for easy retrieval.

Since NASA has a unique classification system, the vendor is required to customize the software to accommodate NASA's needs. The PDM team recognized at the outset of this project that to achieve maximum functionality from this system, it was important that the NSCS data provided to the vendor be accurate and up to date.

Reviewing the 700 Group involved far more work than reviewing the other groups because this group, unlike the others, has a very large number of specialties (approximately 140), and each specialty has a precise definition. A review of these definitions required consultation with subject matter experts in those specialty areas. Since a review of the AST specialties was a major workload, it began in the spring of 2001, with a goal of finishing the work by the fall, the time at which we anticipated the contract award for PDM.



Although the PDM project was the principal reason the review was conducted at this time, it would have been appropriate to conduct the review of the AST Schematic independent of that need. The system has not been reviewed, in a comprehensive manner, since the mid-1980s. To the extent that it may have inaccuracies, it could impact our hiring because the AST system is

linked to a qualifications system—the AST Rating Guide. The AST Rating Guide is a qualification standard, approved by OPM, for AST positions. If the AST Schematic is not up to date and accurate, it will no longer serve its purpose of ensuring that NASA is able to hire scientists and engineers with the right background.

## 2. Will any grades be affected?

No. This project was never concerned with grading criteria; i.e., the basis for assigning a grade to a position. The project was focused on:

- (1) Ensuring that the AST subgroup specialties accurately describe the categories of work being done in NASA;
- (2) Ensuring that the titles of positions are consistent with OPM guidance; and
- (3) Ensuring that the AST specialties are aligned properly to the OPM occupational series.

## 3. Will the pay of any positions be affected?

No employee's pay will be adversely affected. There will be some instances, however, in which employees will be assigned to a pay table with a higher rate of pay due to a change in the OPM occupational series to which the specialty is aligned.

Although there are NASA Classification Codes corresponding to all AST specialties, OPM requires that these specialties be associated with an OPM occupational series. As a result of the review and revision of specialty definitions, there were several instances in which the specialties were aligned with different OPM occupational series. For example, the Data Analysis specialty, 735-05, currently aligned with the Mathematician series (1520), will be aligned with the Computer Scientist series (1550). At certain grade levels, the pay table for the 1550 series is higher than the pay table for the 1520 series, so the employees will receive a higher rate of pay.

There will be no instances of employees being aligned to a different OPM series that would result in a lower pay rate for the employee.

## 4. Will this review result in any changes to the work/projects assigned to employees?

No. This was a review of the *system under which duties are classified*, not a review of the *duties being performed* by any individual employee. This review also has no bearing on the duties that will be assigned, in the future, to any individual employee.

(Continued on page 3)

## Engineering and Scientific Training

Is the training class you need being offered onsite this year?

Check out the FY02 Engineering and Scientific Training Plan to see what classes are being offered on the newest topic, Biotechnology, plus many other classes.

<http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/ODT/etc.htm>

Maintaining an up-to-date education is both an opportunity and a continuing responsibility of every NASA employee. With the rapid evolution of technology and tools, the knowledge obtained by a technical education quickly becomes out-of-date.

Teams composed of engineers and scientists from the following 13 disciplines identify the specific training needs, and who knows better than they? The discipline areas are Acoustics, Chemical/Combustion, Aerospace Propulsion and Systems Analysis, Electrical/Controls/Health Management, Engineering Mechanics/Manufacturing, Optics, Thermal/Fluids/Icing, Software, Systems Engineering, Materials, Pathfinder, Technology Transfer, and Biotechnology.

The discipline teams consist of a facilitator from the Engineering Training Committee (ETC) and discipline experts from the relevant divisions across the lab. This approach enables areas of common interest to be identified and prioritized across organizational boundaries to come up with the most comprehensive and efficient training plan possible.

The ETC was formed in February 1998 to develop a Centerwide, integrated training plan to meet the needs of approximately 1,000 engineers and scientists at GRC and align them to the NASA Strategic Plan and Center Implementation Plan. The members have changed over the years; however, the members at the present time are John Taylor (Chair), Kathleen Schubert, Sandra Foust, Barbara Wiedenmanott, and OD&TO members Nona Akos, Kathy Clark, and Cynthia Forman.

Check out the Web site to see the entire plan.

The 2001 Review of the AST Classification Schematic  
(Continued from page 2)

### 5. Will this review result in any changes to employees' position descriptions?

The types of changes that may occur fall into three general categories:

- Change in a position's job title.  
Example: Specialty 715-03, formerly assigned the NASA title of AST – Mechanics of Materials will be assigned the NASA title of AST – Mechanics of Materials and Structures.
- Change in the OPM series to which the position is aligned  
Example: Specialty 735-03, Software Systems, currently aligned to OPM series 0801, will be aligned to OPM series 0854 (Computer Engineering).
- Change in the specialty to which the position is aligned.  
Example: Eighteen new specialties have been established in areas such as Aero-elasticity (715-65), Nanotechnology Systems (730-70), and Optical Engineering (730-72). Human resources specialists at the Centers may determine that some existing position descriptions should be assigned to one of the new specialties, rather than the specialty to which currently assigned, if the new specialty is a more accurate classification of the work described in the position description.  
Example: Some specialties will not continue being used in the new AST Schematic because the work described in those specialties has been redescribed more accurately in a different, redescribed specialty. To illustrate, the Electromagnetics System specialty (730-40) will no longer be used because the definition for the Electronics Instrumentation Systems specialty (730-10) was updated, and it was determined that the work described in the 730-40 specialty is covered in the 730-10 specialty. Human resources specialists will look at each position description currently assigned to the 730-40 specialty and determine what specialty it is best aligned to. In most cases, it will be 730-10.



## FY01 EMPLOYEE RELATIONS ACTIVITY

Employee Relations is the personnel function that centers on establishing and maintaining employer-employee relationships that contribute to satisfactory productivity, motivation, morale, and discipline. Managing employee conduct through the use of corrective action is a significant part of the employee relations function.

A summary of the Center's FY01 Employee Relations Activity is listed below.

DISCIPLINARY/ADVERSE ACTIONS	ISSUE
3 Reprimands	1 Misuse of Government Resources 1 Misuse of Position 1 Insubordination
3 Alternative Discipline Letters in Lieu of 14-Day Suspension	1 Inappropriate Conduct 1 Misuse of Position 1 Failure to Follow Procedures/Misuse of Resources
2 Suspensions of 14 Days or Less	1 Misuse of Resources 1 Violation of Standards of Conduct/Misuse of Resources
1 Suspension of More than 14 Days	1 Inappropriate Conduct
1 Resignation in Lieu of Removal	1 Misuse of Resources
1 Conversion to Reinstatement Career	1 Unacceptable Performance
OTHER EMPLOYEE RELATIONS ACTIVITY	ISSUE
3 Reasonable Accommodations	Medical

For your information, a list of employee relations disciplinary terms follows:

**ADVERSE ACTION** - Formal corrective action taken for disciplinary and nondisciplinary reasons ranging from suspensions of more than 14 calendar days, furloughs of 30 days or less, reduction in grade or pay, to removal.

**COUNSELING** - Placing an employee on notice that his/her conduct is inappropriate/unacceptable. This may be done verbally and/or in writing.

**DISCIPLINARY ACTION** - Formal corrective action ranging from reprimand to 14-calendar-day suspension, including letters of discipline.

**LEAVE RESTRICTION** - A notice that informs an employee that his/her use of leave is being restricted, usually requiring leave be requested in advance and sick leave absences be supported by acceptable medical documentation.

**LETTER OF DISCIPLINE** - A written disciplinary action that is taken in lieu of a formal suspension action and is temporarily recorded in the Official Personnel Folder.

**LAST CHANCE AGREEMENT** - An agreement that provides an employee a firm choice between rehabilitation and removal. It constitutes an employee's last chance to remain employed by the Center.

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION** - Adjustment made to a job and/or working environment enabling a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to perform the essential duties of the job to which s(he) is assigned.

**REPRIMAND** - An official written rebuke that is placed in the Official Personnel Folder for up to 2 years.

**REMOVAL** - Separation of an employee for unacceptable conduct or performance.

**SUSPENSION** - Placing an employee, for disciplinary reasons, in a temporary status without duties and pay. Suspension actions are permanent records in the Official Personnel Folder.

## NASA EXTERNAL AWARDS

Every quarter, the Center receives requests for nominations for a wide variety of non-NASA awards. A call letter with nomination criteria summaries is sent to the directorate offices for distribution. Please call the Awards Office at 433-2493, for specific information.

The following is a list of non-NASA External Award solicitations due the upcoming quarter, January to March 2002.

*AIAA Awards (Category 3)*  
*Arthur S. Flemming Award (Category 1)*  
*Careers and the Disabled Magazine's Employee of the Year Award (Category 3)*  
*Enrico Fermi Award (Category 1)*  
*Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) Outstanding Achievement Award (Category 1)*  
*FPMI Annual Labor and Employee Relations Award (Category 3)*  
*Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Aerospace Prize (Category 3)*  
*Innovations in American Government (Category 3)*  
*Institute of Navigation Awards (Category 3)*  
*Thurlow, Hays, Weems, and Superior Achievement Awards (*  
*John H. Chapman Excellence Award (Category 3)*  
*Katharine Wright Memorial Award (Category 3)*  
*National Academy of Engineering Awards (Category 3)*  
*Charles Stark Draper Prize*  
*Fritz J. and Dolores H. Russ Prize*  
*Arthur M. Bueche Award*  
*Founders Award*  
*National Air and Space Museum Trophy (Category 1)*  
*Public Service Excellence Award (Category 3)*  
*Robert J. Collier Trophy (Category 1)*  
*Thomas O. Paine Memorial Award for the Advancement of Human Exploration of Mars (Category 3)*  
*White House Closing the Circle Awards (Category 3)*  
*Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Awards (Category 1)*

### Category 1 Awards

These awards are considered very prestigious, and NASA has had significant participation in the past. In accordance with the requirements of the sponsoring organization, nominations must be submitted by the head of the Agency. Awards which include a stipend and/or grant that exceeds \$7,500 or are of special interest to the Administrator, such as those pertaining to minorities and females, have been retained in this category by the Administrator's Office. All award nominations in this category are forwarded by the Agency Personnel Policy Branch (Code FPP) to the Administrator for submission to the sponsoring organization.

### Category 2 Awards

These are also prestigious awards; however, the criteria has limited application and solicitation from the sponsoring organization is often made to multiple addressees in NASA. Since these award nominations may be submitted by someone other than the Head of the Agency, the responsibility has been delegated to the Associate Administrator for Human Resources and Education (Code F). In addition, because the sponsoring organizations limit the number of nominations from the Agency, nominations must be submitted to the Agency Personnel Policy Branch (Code FPP) for processing and submission to the sponsoring organization.

### Category 3 Awards

Annual solicitation from the sponsoring organization in this category is not consistent and sometimes is made through professional society membership, mass distribution, or below the Administrator's level. There is no limit on the number that can be nominated or need for Agencywide screening; therefore, the Agency Personnel Policy Branch (Code FPP) forwards these solicitations for awards to the Officials-in Charge of Headquarters Offices or Center Directors for submittal of nominations directly to the sponsoring organization.



# 2002 CALENDAR YEAR

## JANUARY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## FEBRUARY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

## MARCH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 31	25	26	27	28	29	30

## APRIL

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

## MAY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

## JUNE

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 30	24	25	26	27	28	29

## JULY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

## AUGUST

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## SEPTEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

## OCTOBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## NOVEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

## DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



END OF PAY PERIOD



PAID HOLIDAY

